

# UNIVERSAL HISTORY - 1951

Feringer notes

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## Contents

- **Lecture - 1**
- **Universal History - 1951 - Review**

## Lecture 1

1. A universal history is beneficial for comparisons between different political orders, and to identify change in terms of progress or retrogression. For instance, change in classical Greece brought both strength and weakness. Their brand of Humanism could tolerate but not accept other political systems surrounding them; they could never achieve peace, except temporarily. On the other hand, their invention of philosophy, and with it the concept of generalization, freed them to see themselves and others objectively. Their development of poetry freed them to see others differently: "...a man can see himself and somebody who lives in another order, as friends." (p.2)

2. In the past we have had no universal history because Greek scholars assumed that all things (Western) began with the Greeks, when in fact their culture was not invented full-blown but built upon Egyptian and tribal customs. (p.1)

3. The Bible is a basis for a universal history because it contains all phases of mankind, including Greeks. The Greeks could never establish anything political, however, because they were poets and philosophers, neither of which advocates taking political action. THE ILLIAD REPRESENTS A COMPLETE REFLECTION OF THE GREEK CONTRIBUTIONS.

4. ERH organizes this essay to establish some of the basic lessons from history about mankind, and thus why a Universal History is important to teaching people these basic lessons.

a. God, the tribe, Jews, and empires "...feel eternity whenever they officiate" WHAT IS NOT ETERNAL. This is to say, when they officiate what is unique, individual. The Bible's great lesson is that humankind will die, and life must be organized around this fact.

b. The idea of "self" was born by the Greeks about 1,000 B.C. Before that time, the individual was like a cog in some association, all individuals seen as the same in the tribe and nation as well. Thus, human uniqueness was not a reality. To relax, to read and write poetry as the Greeks did, is to attend the "self" and to conceive one's self-consciousness.

c. Modern psychology makes the mistake of seeing the "self" as coming first, but this concept is not historically accurate. Our first consciousness is that of being a part of something else.

d. Four different forms of the Greek spirit evolved, 1) epics (narrative dramas of Homer), 800 BC, 2) tragedy, 400-500 BC, 3) philosophy, 387-300 BC, 4) literature and Alexandrian period philology, poetry, encyclopedias, 300 BC, during periods of Greek history.

5. In general, ERH attempts in this essay to show us that, unless one can see what changes have been made by different cultures, and what differences there are, then:

...they don't know where they have to be liberals, and where they have to be fighters, and where they have to be family members, and where they have to be patriots. (p.11)

These are the conditions under which tragedy might occur (e.g. The Persian war's effect on Greece).

The great problem of each era is to change, to rise above the problems at hand, and unless we can see our ways clear, to see how others through history have changed, to see phases by which change occurs. Unless there is a universal history we will be stuck within our own society, with no peace within or without. Contrarily, cultures that believe the world began and will end within the time period of their culture have no way of identifying and understanding the consequences of their beliefs.

## **Universal History - 1951 - Review**

This is a fragment that more or less outlines purpose and issues raised in the more complete series of lectures on the same subject dated 1967. However, in this essay he emphasizes the place of the Greeks and their contribution as a summation of previous tribal and "sky empire" cultures and as a preparation for Christianity. He asserts also that the Bible is the first universal history.

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